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in article, interview and photographs

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"The Dance Digest"

FEBRUARY 1956 25 CENTS ★ ★ VOLUME 6 NUMBER 2

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MARGE and GOWER CHAMPION

an informal interview

A DANCING STAR EXCLUSIVE

This is the ninth in a series of informal interviews with well known personalities in the world of dance. The following interview with the Champions took place in San Francisco on November 6, 1955, where they were co-starring with Harry Belafonte in "Three For Tonight".

Q. Where did your current play "Three For Tonight" have its premiere?

A. Actually the first premiere was very rough and was held just for family and friends at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles. The first official premiere was held at Claremont, California.

Q. How long will the run be?

A. We're scheduled to play seventy-seven cities in ninety days.

Q. Marge, nearly everyone in the dance business knows that Ernest Belcher, the famous ballet master, is your father. Such being the case, you must have begun your dance training almost as soon as you could walk. Is that right?

A. Well, I wasn't held back, but at the same time, Daddy doesn't believe in children learning technical work until after the age of five, so anything before that was completely free form and ad lib. I did start about five or five and a half, but I didn't start any point work until I was about eight.

Q. And you majored in ballet?

A. Originally I did, but Daddy also believes in a completely rounded dance education, therefore I studied Spanish with Eduardo and Elisa Cansino, Acrobatic with Sam Mintz and [illegible] rn work as well as singing and

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[illegible]arly training? Did you major in

[illegible] was a very strange kind because [illegible] before I learned how to dance. [illegible] the great dance team, Veloz & [illegible] dance contest at the Cocoanut [illegible]ifteen at the time that my partner, [illegible]is contest, which we won. How[illegible]ncing I had done was ballroom [illegible] worked up one routine while we [illegible]n's in Los Angeles.

Marge and Gower Champion

Our prize for winning this contest was a week's engagement at the Cocoanut Grove. Needless to say, Jeannie and I got busy .We learned three routines. Tom Sheehy taught us one to the then currently popular "Goody Goody", Marge's Father hedped us with a Waltz and someone else gave us a Tango. And that's what the team of Gower & Jean had in their repertoire when they opened at the Grove. Instead of staying for one week, they held us over for thirteen.

After that engagement, I realized that if I were going to stay in show business I really had to learn to dance. So every where we went — we were signed with MCA (Music Corporation of America) — I'd study dancing, and dramatics. I recall studying from a Mr. Popaloff in Cleveland; I studied at the American Ballet School in New York and with Edna McRae in Chicago. I even took Modern from a lady in Dallas — in fact, it was the most scattered dance education I think anybody ever had.

Q. Inasmuch as I won't be able to catch your performance until later, I wonder if you would mind briefing me on this latest, Paul Gregory-Charles Laughton production?

A. Well, first of all, we work on a bare stage, we have no scenery, no elaborate costumes and no elaborate props. As for talent, we have Harry Bellafonte, the great folk singer, Don Beddoe, a character actor who acts as a sort of interlocutor who weaves the different parts of the show together. There are the voices of Walter Schumann that back up some of Belafonte's numbers as well as some of ours. Sometimes they even act as an orchestra. We also have a conductor who conducts by himself in the pit. Both the singer and the orches- ➟

tra are on stage. We feel that it's a completely new form of of concert-revue technique. In fact, I think it's the first time that a conductor has ever conducted from a pit all by himself. And yet he controls the entire stage with a lighted wand. His name is Richard Pribor and he's been with us as our pianist and conductor for about six years. He's a very talented guy who also writes original music.

Q. I've read a number of the reviews your show has been receiving and they are excellent.

A. They have been embarrassingly fine. In fact, we don't quite believe it. When you work so hard on a show as we have on this — we planned it for about a year and started writing it about six months before it opened. We rehearsed five weeks ourselves, and another four with the chorus. Consequently, when you become so involved as we were with the this show, you don't really know what you have until you put it before an audience and start getting reviews. That's why I say I find it hard to believe that it's that good.

Q. Getting back to you as a team, would you tell me where your first dance engagement was?

A. Our first engagement together was at the Normandie Roof in Montreal — we played two weeks there. This was Gower's idea. He wanted to play there because it seemed like home to him as he had danced there for thirty-seven weeks with Jeannie, before the war.

Q. How long after you teamed up was it before you got married?

A. We started our first engagement in April of 1947 and we were married in October. Along the way we had to change our name because when we opened we were known as Gower & Bell, but by the time we reached New York we were Marge & Gower Champion.

Q. After you were married where was your first dance job?

A. We spent our honeymoon at the Plaza Hotel in New York, dancing. We spent our first anniversary at the Plaza Hotel, dancing and we spent our sixth anniversary at the Plaza just last year.

Q. Would you mind telling DANCING STAR readers just how you go about creating a new dance routine for yourselves? In other words, where do you generally get the idea?

A. That is probably the hardest question anyone could ask us. In fact, it's almost impossible to answer. We really don't know. Sometimes it's a piece of music that inspires Gower, sometimes he has the idea for a dance ahead of time. For example, in one instance he had the dance choreographed,

the dialogue written but we didn't have the music until a week before we actually opened. Then he finally found a little French piece that fit it perfectly.

Q. In other words, you have no set plan of approach?

A. No. It's a completely variable thing. For example, we had a routine we did in night clubs called County Fair which was always very successful. It was a routine that was made up and completely choreographed in three days. This was a television number and we had to get it done in a hurry. Other routines may take a tremendous amount of time.

Q. Has your act undergone any major changes since you first teamed up — or is it basically the same?

A. We use the same basic approach. However, we have changed routines and ideas and have improved — we hope. As a night club act we've always tried to present ourselves as entertainers rather than as just dancers. We've always sung a little; done dialogue and pantomime. And we've used every kind of dancing we can think of.

Originally, we didn't have any intention of becoming a dance team. We thought that the best way was to audition for a New York show, which was then our goal, was to have an act that presented every phase of our talents. Gower built the act around this idea and somehow it became our style.

Q. I was just going to mention that the critics often refer to your dancing as an "original Champion style".

A. That just sort of developed as we went along. But the intimacy of our act developed, I think, from one job we had in Washington. We found that we had the same audience two shows a night, seven nights a week. It was a cocktail bar

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and the same people came night after night, so that by the end of the first week they knew our act better than we did. For this reason we were forced to try out a lot of new things, in order to keep them amused, and that is where a lot of the intimacy of our act first began.

Q. Speaking of Washington, would you mind telling me what it was that former President Truman said about your act the night he selected it as the outstanding act at the President's Press Ball?

A. Well, it was at the end of the entire show, when the President, after making some extemporaneous remarks about the Press Ball, picked us out as being representative of America to him. He told the audience that he had enjoyed our act very much. And after it was all over you'd have thought we had been put up for a cabinet post. Everybody rushed back and congratulated us. It broke in the papers, and out of that we got our pictures on the cover of Life magazine.

Q. In other words, that night was the turning point in your professional careers, wasn't it?

A. It certainly was.

EDITOR'S NOTE: If this interview appears to end rather abruptly, it's because the Champions were pressed for time the night our reporter paid them a back stage visit. Consequently a number of queries still remain unanswered. At a later date we hope to complete part two of this interview for our readers. However, we hasten to add that both Marge and Gower gave generously of their time until well nigh curtain time.

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The Champions of Hollywood: Dancers in a Great Tradition

Ever since Vernon and Irene Castle accepted the challenge of ragtime and turned it into piquant business on the ballroom floor, the United States has had a reigning dancing couple. This is only natural. It is music that inspires dancing, and Americans are a very musical people and just as much a dancing people as any African tribe. America has its own world-renowned dance music known as jazz and has also borrowed widely from Vienna to Brazil. America is daft about many sorts of dancing.

Shall we waltz?

Shake that thing.

At the moment the ascendant couple is Marge and Gower Champion (see cover). That is their real name as well as a happy suggestion of the rank they are beginning to be accorded in their field. Young veterans of Broadway and Hollywood, of night clubs and Admiral television shows, they make their latest appearance in M-G-M's "Lovely to Look At," a Technicolored translation of Jerome Kern's old musical comedy, "Roberta." The story of the picture—about a man who inherits part of a Paris dress establishment—is a pretty limp and foolish affair. But there are the treasurable Kern tunes, an opulent riot of gowns by Adrian, and the Champions. Midway in the film they dance out among the stars—swirling apparently in air—and the effect is lyrical and extremely winning. While the Champions occupy the night sky, the picture comes to romantic life, and it does no harm to know that the stars are really 5,000 electric light bulbs and that the couple is performing upon a misty plastic floor the size of a football field. These dancers are skilled mesmerists.

Lively Companions: In his witty and incisive "The State of Music," the composer Virgil Thomson remarks that "dancers are auto-erotic and have no conversation." This has the Thomson touch and a good deal of general pertinence, but it is not an accurate description of Marge and Gower Champion. Among the most infectious impressions they create is that they are young people who think a good deal of each other and who would be lively companions in the talking as well as the dancing department. Those who know them well find that this is no deception. Their tone is young, animated, intelligent, highly American—they have a native command of jazz accents and swinging rhythm. For the rest, they have raised professional versatility to a fine level of artistry. They are tops.

They are not specialists but eclectics, noted for a subtle and witty blending of the three chief styles to be found in modern theatrical dancing—tap, ballet, and modern. Tap dancing is based on the feet, and many tap dancers are perfectly willing to let it stay there. They swing their arms, but they are really not dancing with their bodies. But if there is one generalization to be made about most great dancers of any school, it is that they dance with the whole person. The great Fred Astaire developed a style profoundly based on tap, dominated by it, constantly returning to it, but in which the tapping feet, so to speak, set off bodily dancing of flashing elegance. He dances with everything—the whole Astaire keeps moving through vivid, angular arabesques. The Champions' dancing is not so intensively based on tap, but it is a masterly element in their work.

They are well trained in the oldest traditional vocabulary of movement in the Western world, the classical ballet as elaborated since the seventeenth century. Ballet has had such great commercial success in the United States in recent years that it is easy to forget how many people still think it bewildering, artificial, and absurd. Bernard Shaw was among them, and hosts of others have never gotten the point. The quintessential point has been clearly stated by one of ballet's finest critics, Edwin Denby, in his "Looking at the Dance": "The problem might be described as that of a variable force (the dance impulses) applied to a constant weight (the body). The ballet technicians wanted to find as many ways as possible of changing the impetus of the movement without losing control of the momentum of the body. When a dancer is not sure of his momentum he is like a driver who has no rhythm in driving . . . Watching a dancer whose momentum is under control, you appreciate the change in impetus as an expression. You follow the dance with pleasure, because the dancer has your confidence . . . There have always been great dancers who danced in other techniques than that of ballet. But there have always been great dancers, too, who found in ballet technique an extraordinary range of clear expression."

Classic Clarity: That is what the Champions find. There is much more ballet influence in their work than in that of many modern performers. The glamorous ballroom teams, for instance, from Maurice and Walton of 1914 to the De Marcos of recent years, have in general built their style on the long, lyric line, on seemingly effortless, sweeping ease. Their leaps and lifts and spins may reflect ballet techniques for defying gravity, but in the main they have had as little truck with ballet as with tap dancing. Whereas the Champions' ballet training shows not only in off-the-ground feats but also in a pervasive classicism of carriage. Even in such romantic numbers as their dance among the stars, their line has a clarity and restraint quite unlike the abandoned, bravura manner of the De Marcos.

The Champions' modern, free-style tendencies stem, in their own minds,

Brown Bros. Photos

Maurice and Walton and the Castles delighted the era of Woodrow Wilson.

from the famous pioneer modernist Martha Graham. She, says Marge Champion, "breaks new ground for other dancers and choreographers, who adapt her teachings to commercial media. Martha Graham is up on a pedestal to us . . ." The Champions have also studied at length in New York with Hanya Holm, who arrived there in 1931 as the leading American exponent of the German modernist Mary Wigman. Miss Holm stresses that she does not teach dance routines but "new points of view on movement." She has high admiration for the Champions' ability and energy both as choreographers and dancers, saying simply that they are "people whose life content is that."

Their technical equipment permits great flexibility. In "Lovely to Look At" they dance not only their starry fantasia but also a fast and muscular jazz explosion keyed to the color scarlet, and a trickily arranged number in the Paris shop where their movement becomes involved with dress dummies and whirling stools. They are experts in specifically American forms from the cake walk to bumps and grinds—these last customarily raucous gestures are introduced in their work with deft, understated, and comic effect. They have done considerable satirizing of contemporaries such as Agnes de Mille and Paul Draper, but so far have not appeared in any such rampant burlesquing of the art of dancing itself as made the reputation of the ludicrous team known as the Hartmans.

Family Training: There are dancers, such as Tony De Marco, who are largely or entirely self-taught, who seem born to move beautifully. The Champions, whatever their native abilities, learned their art with plenty of help. Marjorie Belcher Champion, a slim young woman who stands a little over 5 feet tall, has a large, friendly mouth, an ebullient nature, and weighs about 100 pounds, is the daughter of Ernest Belcher, who was one of Hollywood's earliest dance directors and has long had a studio there. She started studying with him at 5 and had a stiff course in ballet rudiments. With one of his assistants, Eduardo Cansino (Rita Hayworth's father), she studied Spanish dancing. When she was 13 she posed as the living model for Walt Disney's "Snow White." Two years later her father felt she might profit from responsibilities, and he put her to work teaching adults.

Her long apprenticeship in professional dancing was no great help to her socially. In the Los Angeles public schools unkind people might have referred to her as a wallflower, and at Bancroft Junior High, in a school show, she did a Portuguese solo while a boy named Gower Champion executed a ballroom duet with another schoolgirl, Jeanne Tyler. He was shortly to attend Ernest Belcher's school, when he and Marjorie became well acquainted, but his entire early dancing development was with Jeanne. Marjorie danced in Los Angeles Civic Opera productions like "Blossom Time" and "The Student Prince" and then went east as Marjorie Bell to take Broadway parts in "Portrait of a Lady," "What's Up?" and "Dark of the Moon." Then, in 1946, she studied modern methods with Hanya Holm and again ran into Gower Champion.

He was born 30 years ago in Geneva, Ill., and taken at the age of 2 to Los Angeles, where his mother started a dressmaking business. When he was 12 she sent him to a conventional social dancing school, which led to his junior-high-school appearance with Jeanne Tyler. Later they began to win first places in the frequent Santa Monica beach-club contests. Gower became sufficiently interested in dancing instruction not only to study with Belcher but also to learn routines from Tom Sheehy, who today is president of the Associated Dancing Teachers of Southern California. In 1937, Gower and Jeanne entered a large contest sponsored by the ballroom team of Veloz and Yolanda at the Cocoanut Grove in Los Angeles. There were 500 couples competing, and Gower and Jeanne took the prize. This was a week's engagement at the Grove for $75, but the management kept them on for thirteen weeks and raised their salary to $125.

Road Team: Champion, who was still only 15, began seriously to consider dancing as a career. The Music Corp. of America then sent the youngsters to a San Francisco hotel engagement and on the road. Gower's mother traveled with the team as chaperone and Jeanne's

→

dressmaker. It was summer vacation and Champion had every intention of returning to Fairfax High School and, eventually, the University of Southern California. But his tour grew longer and increasingly successful. He began taking a variety of lessons en route. "I didn't really study dancing very seriously," he says, "until we began dancing professionally." The upshot was that he never finished high school and that, before the war, he and Jeanne made an excellent debut at the most professionally desirable spot in the country—the Persian Room of New York's Hotel Plaza. "We were lucky," Champion recalls. "We never had to play benefits and chop-suey joints. We always went to the top hotels."

Between 1939 and 1941 the fortunate adolescents also danced in three Broadway shows—"Streets of Paris," "The Lady Comes Across," and "Count Me In." After Pearl Harbor, Champion enlisted in the Coast Guard, where he was featured in the service musical "Tars and Spars" and saw transport duty in both oceans. Jeanne Tyler was married during the war and left show business. In 1947 Gower formed a team with Marjorie Belcher. They made their dancing debut at a Montreal hotel, presently got married, and then scored their own smash hit at the Persian Room and went on to steady television successes with the Admiral Broadway Revue. During this period they appeared at a Washington press party and President Truman was heard to opine that they were a magnetic and characteristically American couple.

Time Out: In 1948 Marge Champion twisted an ankle and Gower took advantage of her enforced vacation to work as a choreographer. He did the little revue "Lend an Ear," peopled by unemployed Hollywood youngsters, which was a smash there and on Broadway, winning Champion the Donaldson and Antoinette Perry awards for the outstanding dance routines of the year. Shortly afterward he directed the dances for "Small Wonder," which was poorly received except for his contributions. There followed a Champion team appearance with Bing Crosby in Paramount's "Mr. Music," a Los Angeles night-club triumph at the Mocambo, and finally the seven-year

Culver

the Astaires and the De Marcos . . .

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Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer contract under which the couple are now working.

They have a five-room house in the Hollywood hills, with a full-size rehearsal hall complete with cork floor and ample mirrors. There are also a collection of china cats and five of the living species. The Champion library is varied, steadily used, and branches extensively into phonograph records. Gower Champion is a rather taut, hard-working professional who cannot possibly weigh more than 150 no matter how much his wife feeds him (she can and does cook in bulk). Marge Champion is the household safety valve in the way of relaxation and bright spontaneity. Both have always continued to study. Gower has had ballet lessons with Leon Fokine both before and since the war. Last year the team studied tap with a California master, Louis da Pron, and this year they are working with an M-G-M dance director, Nick Castle.

One close student of Hollywood affairs gives it as his opinion that the Champions are the "pleasantest, best-adjusted, and most intelligent" pair he has met in the film colony. Gower Champion has been quoted in the offhand comment that "we are repulsively in accord." No one who has seen them dance could possibly subscribe to the adverb.

Marge and Gower: The home team

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DANCE IN RETROSPECT — San Francisco — 1955

Everyone in San Francisco, during the year 1955, slowly realized that the city of the Golden Gate was actually experiencing the artistic rebirth which we have all long talked about in salons and cellar bars. Those who have centered their lives upon theatre — and concert — going have all but given up to the conclusion that the artistic life of this city is getting too multiple to allow attendance at every important event. And, as for critics, they have fairly well slumped back in total exhaustion and frustration. The point is that the artistic life of San Francisco has developed into an exceedingly fertile and active universe of its own. This is accounted for not merely by the increased numbers of national artists who have come here to be applauded by a sophisticated and intelligent city, but by the vast numbers of persistent and excellent local groups which have taken definite form during the past year.

Just as opera, chamber music, symphony and drama have crowded many large and small theatres of San Francisco, dance has given itself a suddenly vast and essential importance in the city. At present it is regretful that no true dance center exists in San Francisco, but this has not altered the enthusiastic performances in theatres by local and national dance organizations. Dance has also taken to the air and television: with Richard Ford's dance feature on KQED-TV and the forthcoming dance series to be presented by The Contemporary Dancers in affiliation with station KPFA-FM.

In ballet performances, San Francisco has greeted many outstanding groups in 1955: THE SAN FRANCISCO BALLET, under the direction of Lew Christensen and James Graham - Lujan, presented its regular annual season at the Memorial Opera House for a full week as well as random and impressive individual concerts at Stern Grove and the Music Chest. Vigorous in its efforts during 1955, the San Francisco Ballet premiered a number of important new works including such modern ballets as **"Appollo Musagete"** and **"Renard."** Also new to the repertory was the lyrical and lovely **"Beauty and the Shepherd"** along with the essential and convincing **"Masque."** Following such innovations came the San Francisco Ballet's tasks as the annual corps de ballet for the grand opera season of this city. And in December the ballet will have presented its ninth annual Christmas presentation of the complete **"Nutcracker."**

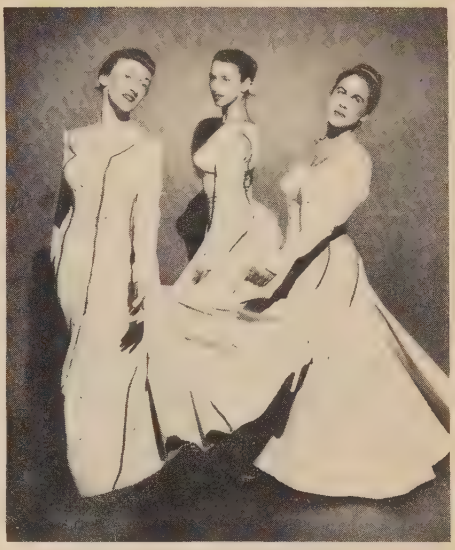
THE NEW YORK CITY BALLET came to San Francisco in August to present two of the world's most impressive weeks of ballet. In the San Francisco world of ballet, nothing was so meaningful, so interesting and important as the first week of repertory performances during which works such as **"The Cage," "The Luel," "Western Symphony,"** and **"Afternoon of a Faun"** were presented. In this company headed by George Balanchine and with strikingly novel choreographies by Jerome Robbins, two dancers took high honors: Melissa Hayden and Fran-

cisco Moncion, with lovely Tanaquil Leclercq giving us her always impressive performances.

THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET (reviewed in this issue) came to America and to San Francisco with mixed but splendid works. The classical efforts which we had seen in previous years, **"The Sleeping Beauty"** and **"Swan Lake,"** continued to enchant us despite their seeming loss of general perfection; while we took quiet interest in England's efforts in the direction of the modern ballet. Lovely and perfect as always was Margot Fonteyn with her handsome and powerful partner, Michael Somes.

The BALLET CELESTE under the direction of Merriam Lanova showed itself as a leading company of children ballet dancers in several local performances, including their act III of **"Swan Lake,"** another **"Swan Lake"** sequence entitled **"The Six Princesses,"** and **"The Nutcracker."**

The ACADEMY OF BALLET COMPANY and THE MARIN SYMPHONY BALLET joined in concert on June 28th, premiering Carolyn Parks' **"The Secret Garden"** and



Halprin-Lathrop Company Trio
—Edloe Risling

Guillermo del Oro's **"Divertissements"** as well as a novel suite of dances choroeographed by Leona Norman entitled **"L'Armoire a Porcelaine."** Leading dancer was Eva Schoenberg.

THE SERGEI TEMOFF BALLET celebrated its tenth anniversary in April, presenting an evening of ballet for the Contra Costa Concert Guild consisting of **"Princess Turandot," "Two Sides of a Coin"** and

⟹

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"Spring in Vienna."

As essential and numerous were the programs of modern dance, a field which has found a vastly increased audience in San Francisco.

THE MERCE CUNNINGHAM COMPANY presented an inventive program of dances at Marine's Theatre in November, en route to the Orient. The group was accompanied by Mr. John Cage and his innovations for tape recorder. Dances included such non-objective experiments as **"Collage I," "Fragment"** and the renowned **"Suite by Chance."**

JEAN ERDMAN, also en route to the Orient, appeared in a solo concert early in the year: presenting her imaginative **"Changing Woman,"** the intensely dramatic **"Ophelia,"** and the lightweight masterpiece **"Sweet and Bitter Sweet."** Miss Erdman was accompanied at the piano by Leroy Miller, and the event was sponsored by the San Francisco Dance League.

THE CONTEMPORARY DANCER COMPANY presented its first performance in February and has subsequently performed each month of the year, premiering some fifty works. The group also ventured on tour under the auspices of Dorothy Huttenback to the Southland, presenting two of their major works. Heading the dance group are soloists James Croshaw and Glena Shaw.

THE HALPRIN-LATHROP ModENR DANCE COMPANY presented tw[illegible] atre during 1955, as well as several invitational dance recitals at the Dance Deck of Ann Halprin in Kentfield. New works included **"Shifting Landscapes," "Masque,"** and **"Madonna."** Featured also in the year's activities of this outstanding group was the premiere of a dance film by Welland Lathrop and J. Padgett Payne and the New York appearance of Ann Halprin as a soloist in the De Rothschild Modren Dance Season.

MILLS COLLEGE presented on March 30th, an excellent program of dances by choreographers Rebecca Fuller, Eleanor Lauer and Marian Van Tuyl. Marian Van Tuyl also contributed to local and national dance development thru the publication of her scholarly and fine dance annual **Impulse.**

THE PETERS - WRIGHT DANCE THEATRE GROUP presented their annual showing at Marine's Theatre, giving a broad cross-section of unaffiliated dance soloists and groups on March 25th. This same group was active in the greatly improved and expanded dance performances in the 1955 San Francisco Art Festival. Dancers included Judy Job, Gloria Unti, Carol Beals, Tallulah Adair, Marjorie Markel, Bari Rolfe, and Lenore Peters Job.

In the field of ethnic dance there were several festivals of community folk dancing as well as some concert performances of colorful interest:

JOSE GRECO and his company performed twice in the Bay Area, presenting programs of great vitality, technical perfection and beauty.

JEAN DESTINE gave a concert [illegible] dances of love and play under the auspices of the Spencer Barefoot Celebrities Concerts.

THE LOLA MONTES DANCERS appeared in Spanish dances at

Stern Grove.

KATHERINE DUNHAM and her polished, vigorous group gave performances at the Geary Theatre before packed houses.

THE RUTH BECKFORD COMPANY gave its initial general-public performance as a portion of the San Francisco Art Festival. The group showed great vigor and enthusiasm which may develop into an equally great talent.

At the turning of the year, San Francisco has taken many steps towards the establishment of itself as the dance center of the West. With the events already scheduled for 1956, the principle efforts in this direction will be realized: the education of a public in the joys and meanings of dance not merely as an entertainment but as an art.

To artists, San Francisco is one of the most generous of American cities. It sponsors a host of musical and dramatic activities. But it has yet to really lend its financial and organizational aid to the dance. Already random people are speaking of a city center project in San Francisco which might provide the same impetus which the New York City Center has rendered art. It is by now no child's dream: the talents, minds and materials are all assembled; in 1955

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'Concerto Grosso' by the Contemporary Dancers. Left to right: Wimer, Crowshaw Kothing and Garcia. —Photo by Phiz

this vast storage of aims and efforts has increased amazingly. It merely remains for San Francisco to take note of dance with the seriousness and urgency which it not too long ago glanced at in the fields of opera, drama, modern painting and sculpture.

It has taken dance a long while to regain the time it lost when traditions and entertainments stifled its growth. Now, in the twentieth century, as one critic not long ago said, dance seems to reveal itself as one of the most capable arts: capable of expressing our complicated minds and bodies as members of a modern age. The noted sexologist and philosopher in his book **The Dance of Life,** Havelock Ellis, sensed the primal and profound nature of dance when he said: **"Dancing is the loftiest, the most moving, the most beautiful of the arts, because it is no mere translation or abstraction from life, it is life itself."**

This is a credo which during 1956, we hope more and more San Franciscans as well as others throughout our nation grow to understand and appreciate. It is this belief and understanding which will make dance an even greater human asset during the new year.

SAN FRANCISCO AND THE SADLER'S WELLS BALLET

Artistic organizations dedicated to the theatre build reputations. They do this in accordance or despite their journalistic critics. And the reputations which they create through hard work and favorable results are the very source of their life.

It is always disturbing to realize how brief the artistic life span of the dancer is; particularly since a good part of the active years are spent in study towards a career. Likewise, the life span of a dance organization is greatly dependent upon the vitality of its performers. A reputation is built, for the most part, upon the existence of vitality and imagination. That the Sadler's Wells Ballet presented us with such characteristics in its previous performances in the United States is undeniable. What is fantastically sad is the fact that it is more than apparent that the Sadler's Wells has not only slipped, but has shown a marked decline in its vitality and imagination.

I should say at the outset that, in my opinion, this has almost nothing to do with the absence of Moira Shearer and Robert Helpmann. Margot Fonteyn possesses and has always possessed all the charm and artistic insight to head this company. The problem seems to be one of the inevitable or, at least, almost inevitable rise and decline of things physical.

For the general press it has been a simple matter to declare that the Sadler's Wells has declined, like a detached notice in the obituary. But for one who speaks in a publication dedicated to the dance, the ease of comment is not so arguable. To the contrary, whatever caused the acceptance and presentation of the fundamentally poor "modern" premiered works is cause for investigation by the directors of the Ballet. And for whatever reason even those glorious standard classics of the repertory suffered from a lack of their earlier perfection is, again, serious cause for immediate consideration by the Sadler's Wells group. One cannot speak of the highlights and lowlights of the performances by the Sadler's Wells only because the entire group's season

Geraldine Vhlig with Ballet Celeste

in San Francisco proved to contain a basic flaw. For some time it was merely disappointing: a great classical ballet company slipped. For most of us it is deeply sorrowful.

In thinking about the reportory which the Sadler's Wells Ballet carried to the United States, one guesses that there was more than a little misjudgment. America is heralded for its exceedingly imaginative and vital New York City Ballet. Perhaps for this reason The Sadler's Wells Ballet made its "modern" efforts: but like the earlier miscarriage of artistic purpose in "Checkmate," such works as "Tiresias" succeeded only in dimly shadowing the type of poetic intuition which generates and creates modern choreographic works of art. Strained, but nonetheless fine were the full-length productions of "Swan Lake" and "The Sleeping Beauty." "Madame Chrysantheme" is a ballet which falls into the area of general unimportance, a state of affairs which, unfortunately, characterized all of the new works presented in the United States. Suffering from a weak score by Alan Rawsthorne and a tedious pretext, the ballet is suited to the old idea that ballet is a sort of fascinating circus event in which the soloists perform spectacular feats to the audience's amazement. (The point in case, however, is that no one can match wits with the circus when it comes to daring spectacle — would that producers would recognize even so lame a reason to set aside the tour de force tradition in ballet.)

In due repsect to a fine ballet company ,we place the performance of "Swan Lake" in special note for its moments of impressive brilliance and even breath-taking beauty. It remains, however, that "Swan Lake" is much more than a number of scattered breathless moments, and certainly more than the impressive sets and costumes which the designer gave to us. For whatever reason the Sadler's Wells Ballet, an insti-

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EARLY FALL SEASON — NEW YORK CITY

BY RYLLIS HASOUTRA

"One World" seems to booming in New York — dance-wise at least. Never before have so many fine dancers and dances of so many different countries been shown here in the first half of any season.

First came Denmark's brilliant Royal Ballet with traditional ballets dating back to de Bourneville which was practically the beginning of dancing on toe. It was a memorable event and we're looking forward to their return performances scheduled for next Spring.

Then England's finest, The Sadler's Wells Ballet, with Margot Fonteyn and a splendid company which had a packed house and enthusiastic run at the Metropolitan Opera House.

Now the New York City Ballet with three new works and many beloved old ones will remain at City Center Theatre till after the holidays.

Meanwhile, a whole series of brilliant soloists have kept us busy — The great Escudero, dean of Spanish dance —Carmen Amaya, that wonderful gypsy whirlwind — Antonio, another famous gypsy who with his company has taken Europe by storm these past two years. Rarely does one see a performance so perfect in so many details. It is great art and great theatre.

Katherine Dunham and Company are at the Broadway Theatre with a colorful and very entertaining show. Vanoye Aikens is outstanding and the very beautiful newcomer, Raimonda Orselli, is a lovely dancer. Rumor has it that they are bound for another world tour shortly.

India was most strikingly represented by Nala Najan and Company at a Tibetan Temple, a beautiful retreat built by Jacques Marchais for artists and students from the Far East, on top of the highest hill of Staten Island in the Narrows of N. Y. Harbor. In the Eastern Garden with trees and wind-swept sea as background — the strange tones of Indian music and Nala Najan's extraordinary dancing presented an unforgettable picture. Next day at a conventional concert hall one was able to see the same performance in greater detail. His technique, particularly his foot work, is amazing. His sensitive use of intricate music and clear, well defined gesture language, and his tremendous vitality, recharges the traditional Bharata Natyam dances with life and beauty.

Tally Beatty with his Company of ten appeared in a program of Haitian, Brazilian, African and American Negro dances, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Mr. Beatty has an effortless technique and free flowing movements whether in fine controlled nuances or breathtaking acrobatics. "No More Home Than a Dog", a triumph of humorous understatement and "Mourner's Bench", an exquisite tragedy, can never be forgotten.

Another exponent of Ethnic dance, La Meri, has ventured on a new and highly entertaining creation, her "Little Show". Charming, poised, looking as fresh and soignee as the most glamorous movie star, she tells the story of her life and world travels in song, dance and chatter, with utterly delightful humor and great artistry. With Stewart Will at the piano (and an occasional exotic instrument from Burma or Java) La Meri shows the essence of each country's native dances and the use of Indian, Javanese, Hawaiian gesture language in telling tales, sacred and profane. The masterpiece was an American Indian singing "Down the Navajo Trail" in his native signs; or was the masterpiece the bowed legged Gaucho who does **not** look like Valentino? Subtle, amusing, hilarious, but always with great taste and beauty, her "Little Show" is a rare treat.

Myrna Kinch and Company with Ted Shawn as guest artist, appeared last

—Stephan

Nala Najan

Sonia Arova and Job Sanders in Ballet Theatre's 'Gala Performance'.

night (Dec. 10) at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. In a new work, "Sundered Majesty," Mr. Shawn's portrayal of the aged, mad King Leaf, was powerful and moving. Miss Kinch's Cordelia was a fragile, lovely vision and William Milie's Fool was magnificently done. The choreography by Myrna Kinch is well developed and is a good dance drama. The setting by John Christian was starkly effective. The only accompaniment was the voice of Lear, read by Adolf Anderson from text edited by Manuel Galea. It is a fine work well done and it was good indeed to see Mr. Shawn again.

Two more new works were given. "Magnolia For Three" (world premiere) with true Kinch humor projects the old south, decadence and tragedy in a riotously funny sequence. Magnolia was danced by Myra who looks like a young Tallulah and by her three lovers, william Milie, Ted Forlow, Elonzo Dann. Celene Keller as Little Blossom was definitely fey and frustrated.

"Along Appointed Sands" (N. Y. premiere) the story of Hero and Leander, with many fine dance phrases and accompanied by the strange swish of the sea, is a beautiful work.

"The Angel of Puno" is a little jewel and "Giselle's Revenge" a whole crown of them!

TODAY: Sonia Arova and Job Sanders of Ballet Theatre were married in New York, Sunday, December 11th. Miss Arova will appear as one of the guest stars with the Ruth Page Company opened here December 20 for seven performances at the Broadway Theatre. Other guest stars will be Alicia Markova, Ruth Ann Koesun and Oleg Briansky. Miss Page's new works are "Revenge", based on Il Trovatore, and "The Merry Widow."

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LONDON FOOTNOTES

by

PETER CRAIG-RAYMOND

★ ★ ★ John Cranko, who has choreographed works for the Wells and Rambert companies, is responsible for a novel late-night entertainment 'Cranks' at the little off-beat Watergate-theatre. With only four artists, 'Cranks' runs to twenty-eight items in the two hour program: Marcia Ashton, a young dancer with a a thick sense of humor...Gordon Heath who danced with the Caribbean group of Boscoe Holder...Anthony Newley, a talented young actor and singer...and Gilbert Vernon who recently left the Wells Ballet. The work is worthwhile, too, both stage and video stars, directors and agents conspire here. Certainly, in one ten minute intermission, I had hello's from eight different talent buyers!

★ ★ ★ Violetta Elvin, returned from the U.S.Sadler's Wells tour, danced the ballet in 'Where The Rainbow Ends' at Festival-hall. Alicia Markova starred last year. Anton Dolin, of course, repeated his role of St. George. There is a state plan to build a smaller (1100-seat) auditorium adjoining the Festival-hall, by the way. This might conceivably lend itself to smaller dance groups.

★ ★ ★ Sponsored television-three months old-found itself with its first ballet in a telecast of Elvin from Festival-hall.

★ ★ ★ A musical adaptation of Louisa Alcott's sugar 'n spice novels 'Little Women' and 'Good Wives' opened at the Picadilly to an expected cool reception. With uneventful music by John Pritchett and to a book and sometimes clever lyrics by Peter Myers, Alec Grahame and David Climie, 'A Girl called Jo' has a charm of manner and a few good performances. But it is far removed from hit chances. The choreography by Michael Charnley was, sadly, cut to nothing before the show opened in town. (There was a tryout tour). Only recognizable names among the dancers: Pat Kirschner who toured the U.S. with Festival Ballet, and Barbara Joss who danced with Robert Atkin's company last year.

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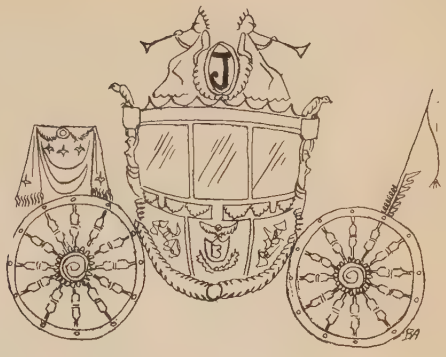

(CONTINUED FROM LAST MONTH)

We hadn't but when we did we knew what he meant. The smallest salary any of them would listen to was about twice our budget for the entire production. A Paris reputation? "Man, I done got *my* reputation right here." Paris a wonderful city? "Mister, *no* place ain't wonderful 'less you're gettin' the dollars." Well, why not consider it as a sort of paid vacation? "The way my bookings are," said Duke Ellington, "it don't look like my band will get a vacation for around five years."

Two days later André was talking about taking ship to Buenos Aires. There were plenty of Argentines in Paris and they all had money; they had some great entertainers down there, too. We'd get a couple of the best *gaucho* bands . . . he grew more and more enthusiastic. Look at that woman on the boat, Senora Zelmira Paz de Gainza, traveling with ten maids, her own chef, four automobiles, three secretaries and two extra cabins for her trunks, you didn't find *North* Americans traveling like that. Or take Senor Martinez de Hoz, whose horse, Craganour, had just been disqualified after winning the Derby, why, that man alone had bought up the entire Paris Opera to give a party for his friends. He must have been crazy, André said, meaning himself. *C'est idiot.* What was he doing in New York when all the money was in South America?

AT this point the lights went dim and the show came on and before it ended Buenos Aires was forgotten and our troubles, in a manner of speaking,

were over. I had given voice to my great idea.

We were in the Cotton Club. I have said that at this time the clubs with colored entertainers gave the best shows in New York and this was true of the one we watched that night. Speed was the name for it. Most speakeasy entertainment was on the intimate side: Helen Morgan on a piano, Texas Guinan and her girls, Durante, Clayton and Jackson. There weren't many top-liners; you didn't have to be good, the customers watched everything through a smog of bootleg. There were a few ambitious places with fifty or more girls in the lineup but these showed more flesh than talent. The great boom was on, a gingerale setup was $2.50, a property sandwich a dollar and a half, a glass of needled beer one smacker, a fifth of New Jersey scotch ten dollars, and there was some fizzy stuff in champagne bottles that sold for twenty-five. Who cared? Your barber had just made two grand on Steel Common, the manicure girl was riding Radio, any taxi bandit had a tip in exchange for yours and if yours was less than a buck bill he was like as not to hand it back, "Here, pal, you need it more than I do." It was a gorgeous merry-go-round, you had to hang on for dear life. There had been 12,000 saloons in the old legal days, now there were 50,000 speaks, every basement on Fifty-Second Street had at least one, any cop could give you an address. Every show made money whether it was good or bad; with a flask on every hip the mildest gag became a riot. People were singing, *I Can't Give You Anything But Love, Baby* and *Some Sunny Day* and an acquaintance of mine had cleaned up by bringing over from Glasgow a cargo of *empty* scotch bottles, complete with genuine labels, which he sold for a dollar each.

Showbiz had never been so good and the shows, like the liquor, had never been so bad. But the Cotton Club was an exception. The club featured none of the big names; this was where most of them had started; the place leaked talent all over New York. You couldn't just be a chorus girl and get a job at the Cotton Club, you had to be a specialist as well. You had to be better than good. As a chorus these girls were young, beautiful and drilled, but it was as individuals that they

shone. A chorus of 25 gave that many acts; the show lasted hours. Patrons were mostly white people who knew what they wanted. When you wish to hear Negro songs sung as they are meant to be sung you are foolish to listen to any but a Negro singer and when you want natural honest rhythm you seek it among the folk who have it in their blood. These were some of the reasons why the Cotton Club was a success and why it is still vivid in my memory. The performers were natural-born dancers and natural-born singers and they loved their work. Any baby-faced white girl with the right measurements and the ability to keep time could get a job down on Broadway; in Harlem she had to be an artist as well.

You'll know by now that a girl who stood out in a Cotton Club show was not merely good, she was a wow. And the one that wow'd Woon that night was the only one who wasn't, by ordinary standards, beautiful. Where most of the other girls were curvy, voluptuous, this one was actually skinny: you could see her bones. She was taller than the rest and had an astonishing voice, entirely disproportionate to her inadequate chest, a rich contralto with a kind of a savage tang to it as if she'd peppered her throat just before singing.

SOME of the girls could sing and all could dance; this one could do both. But her dancing was like nothing I'd ever seen anywhere because of the extravagant, not to say pointed, use she made of the portion of her rear immediately south of the backbone. If art is skilled originality, as someone once defined it, then this was art. What would have been a disaster to any other woman with her was a triumph. What other dancers expressed with their eyes, their mouths, their feet, their legs, their what-you-may-call-'ems, this girl expressed by turning her back. Technique? She was made of it and it was all her very own.

I turned to André and pointed to her. "There's your answer. Build your show around that girl. She will slay those *boulevardiers*. You'll turn them away." Daven, a smart man, got the point. He realized that names which meant everything on Broadway meant nothing at all in Paris and that therefore he could

as easily star this unknown girl, with her remarkable talent and still more remarkable *derrière,* as easily as he could star Ethel Waters, who had herself risen to fame in this same club.

She came to our table flushed after five encores, wearing a short simple red gown that hung from her bony shoulders as if they had been a wire hanger. We told her how much we had enjoyed her performance and she agreed at once. "Yes, I sure put it on tonight." We asked her name and she said it was Josephine Baker and she was 24 years old and born and raised in Harlem. No one had taught her to dance, she said, she had just learned her ownself.

"Would you like to play in Paris?" Daven asked, with his soft accent.

Her eyes widened. "Paris? You mean Paris, France?"

She said she didn't know how she could sing in Paris because she knew no French. Daven said not to worry, what she had was international, she was an artist. This pleased her. Were there any colored folk in Paris? We told her quite a few, the best bands were Negro and the smartest nightclub was run by a Negress named Florence. She asked about discrimination and we said there was none in France, there were laws against it. "Man, that's where I belong." The matter of pay came up and Daven, watching her carefully, suggested three thousand francs a week and expenses both ways. "Excuse we one moment," she said and went over and talked to the man with the saxophone and brought him back to the table. "Joe here was in Paris and he says that ain't no money, I had ought to get double." André went up to five thousand. "And a percentage," she said instantly. "And a percentage," André agreed, "if you'll help get together the company." She hesitated. "You sure about this discrimination?" We both reassured her emphatically. "Means I can go anywhere a white person goes?" You bet, we said. She got up and executed a double shuffle, "Paris, here I come."

The next day I went back on the *Paris;* Daven stayed in New York a few weeks and when he returned to France everything had been arranged. Josephine, he

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said, had proved a gift from Heaven, she knew every colored girl in the business, what they could do, what they were worth, and most of the men entertainers as well. But she was a hard girl to get along with, the minute she heard she was to be starred she had started getting difficult, wanting more money, a bigger percentage. What's more, Daven was worried about something else. Josephine, he said, was a sick girl. Her lungs were bad. What the Paris climate would do to her was anyone's guess.

Daven proved to be a good producer. The pair he had writing the show were the best in the business and the sets were built by a scenic artist renowned for originality. Sasha and I combined our sources to titillate public curiosity and when opening night came it was as big an event of its kind as anything seen in Paris since the war. When it was over I was proven a good prophet. Josephine had laid 'em in the aisles.

A century and a quarter before, another Josephine had reigned in Paris as empress; she, too, had had colored blood. When Josephine II heard that there was no holding her. She branched out until she was a flaming bush; no *other* Josephine was going to have anything on her. She acquired a gilded coach-and-six, with a cockaded footman, in which she took the air in the Champs-Elysées. She married an Italian count, wealthy and authentic. She needed no Napoleon. Before World War II sent her to South America she had conquered tuberculosis, bought her own Paris theatre and was said to have a million dollars in the bank.

She was perhaps the most difficult, unreasonable, obstinate, vain and ruthless little lady ever to hit the Paris Rialto and the bigger she got the bigger grew the chip on her shoulder. She was and is a very great showman. Definitely she needed no Napoleon. After all, he didn't handle the first Josephine very well. •

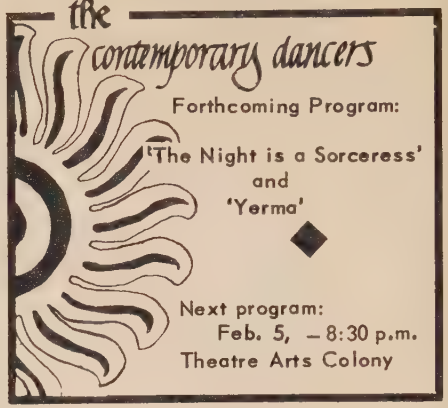
LONDON FOOTNOTES
(from page 68)

★ ★ ★ The little-france-in-London club, le Cote d' Azur, is trying a cabaret policy and as first try has the Hungarian ballet dancer Klari Szechy and the Roberts Duo. Highspot is a balleticized 'football' solo based on the football presented recently by the Soviet Moiseyev Dancers. This huge group, by the way, grossed $130,000, representing a $100,000 attendance!

★ ★ ★ The worst presentation of the year to a deservedly almost non-existent audience, was the Carlton Ballet League's 'Apres Midi de Ballet' featuring pupils of the Legat School. Never was worse advertisement for a school given exposition. The Legat School boasts of itself as the only thorough school of Russian ballet and as the centre of yoga body control. Not only was evidence of superior body control lacking, these pupils lacked even basic physical requirements. Their ballet technique was of the most elementary standard and their total depression throughout the performance was heartbreaking. Yet the complete 'Les Sylphides' was attempted! Teachers should think long and searchingly before presenting their pupils on stage. And better the well-done simplest movements (even exercises) than attempting the impossible.

★ ★ ★ Ballet Montmarte accompanied Bob Hope during his tenth Christmas junket-this one to Iceland....Ron Taylor choreographed for the new little theatre revue 'May Fever' at the Lindsay....I spent my busiest week of the year—five evenings at the theatre, two matinees, two late-night shows and three clubs—plus watching television in every other minute, made me happy by BBC-TV's Christmas surprise to me: a good review on TV of my book!

★ ★ ★ Markova and her partner Milorad Miscovitch return to London to dance a scene from Casse Noisette on ATV's 'Sunday Night at the Palladium' show. Markova has, of course, been dancing in Ruth Page's 'Merry Widow' in New York.



EARLY FALL SEASON IN N.Y.
(from page 65)

tution of a nation renowned for its artistic conversativism, is most impressive and proficient in its traditional and classical efforts, it remans that in hardly an instance has its staff of choreographers succeeded in reaching beyond the traditional. The efforts to do so have been for Americans unimpressive perhaps because each modern theme or modern concept of design represents not a new concept but the old one slightly remodelled. America is the homeland of modern dance and, subsequently, of the modern ballet; Americans, therefore, have a primary insight into the forces which stimulate modern artistic works. What we seem forever to most appreciate from the shores of old England is the tradition of splendour, the moments of the past which the mother country possesses in its rich history. Our most recent encounter with the English ballet in the person of the Sadler's Wells has shown us a less perfect past and an even less perfect present. Our hopes continue to look forward to the rejuvenation of the traditional splendor of the Sadler's Wells Ballet which we have known.

★ ★ ★ Pauline Harrop, Norma Lowden and Peter Wright of Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet appeared on BBC-TV in the Wells production of Smetana's 'Bartered Bride'. This opera came over very successfully on the small screen. ★

Teachers' and Students' section

Ballerina interprets Boogie. Margaretha von Bahr (right), prima ballerina of the Finish National Opera Ballet renewed an old friendship with Tuulikki Reedley, Calif. dance teacher, and picked up some jive steps to take back home. Miss von Bahr enjoys the unique distinction of being the first dancer to be awarded a State Department Grant under the International Educational Exchange Program.

—Photo by J. Nurmi

The Texas Association Teachers of Dancing held its 26th Annual Convention at the Baker Hotel in Dallas, Texas in Dec. The faculty included: Nathalie Branitzka, Ballet; Roye Dodge, Tap; Jane Dodge, Modern Jazz; Carolyn Parks, Children's Ballet; Bob Kimble, Children's Work; Peggy Lorenz, Baby Novelties; Virginia Self, Acrobatic and Jack Storey, Dance Team Work. The all-day session faculty of the Ballroom Division was composed of: Joe Piro, Stevens of Hollywood, Kotche, Don and Lorraine Cranford, James Leito, Jr., Margie Stubblefield, Grover Abel and Lillian LuPau, and Ralph and Doris Abel. Officers elected were: Lillian Cain, President; Virginia Self, 1st V.P. Mary Frances Garlington, 2nd V.P.; Goodloe Lewis, Corresponding Secretary; Frances Burgess Bleeker, Secretary-Treasurer. Board of Directors: Ella Ilse, Dorothy Coulter Edwards and Judith McCarty Hansen. The 1956 Normal School will be held in Dallas, Texas the last week in June.

—John Messina Studios

These Charter Members of the Houston Youth Symphony Ballet were part of the principal cast of 'The Little Match Girl' which was performed in Houston, Texas and later restaged for a complete TV performance. Left to right: Jeannine Durham, Sue Harlow, Sandra Faust and Melba St. Clair.

HOUSTON YOUTH SYMPHONY

The Houston Youth Symphony Ballet emerged from the test tube stage for the first time this year in a pageant of color and choreography that showed promise of a busy artistic future when it presented 'The Little Match Girl'. Emmamae Horn, local Houston teacher choreographed and staged the production.

Held in the Music Hall in Houston, the Ballet, preceded by a concert by the Houston Youth Symphony, received enthusiastic response from nearly 3,000 persons.

The Ballet, accompanied by the Youth Symphony, was danced by some forty dancers from Houston and the Gulf Coast area. Also on the program was the Youth Symphony Boy's Choir. Twenty-six different dance studios were represented in the production.

The Houston Youth Symphony Ballet operates no academy, but depends upon local teachers to recommend their best students for the company.

DANCE TEACHERS!

The enlightening article: "YOU OWE IT TO YOUR CHILD!" should be read by the parents of every student in YOUR school . . . SAVES YOUR TIME (by answering numerous questions) HOLDS YOUR STUDENTS (by better understanding) MAKES YOU MONEY (by helping to hold your students longer)

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Gloria Bauer is one of a number of talented dancers who will perform in the Fay Christy recital in February.

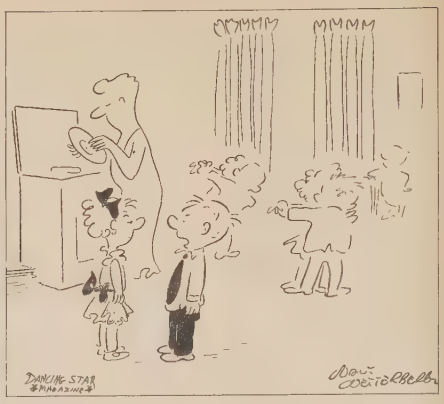
COMING NEXT MONTH:

The Story of the

SAN FRANCISCO DANCE LEAGUE

Its History, Growth, Ideals and Aims

Darlene Nelson, protege of James Rozanas, won the Tumbling and Free Exercise competition at the 5th Annual Gymnastic Clinic at Sarasota, Fla. Darlene was the only girl to win two first places at the Junior meet. She will accompany Rozanas on his 10th Annual teaching tour this year.



'Now before we start, I want it understood that I don't like small talk.'

TAKES TRIP

Lew Serbin of the Dance Art Co., in San Francisco, left recently as guest of the National Union of Theatrical Artists. Some of the countries he will visit are: The Maya Land of the Yucatan Peninsula, Haiti, Trinidad, Monitaba, Camaguay, Havana, Puerto Rico, Bahamas, Curacau, and the Virgin Islands. Mr. Serbin will also attend the International Exposition at Trujillio (Dominican Republic).

Certainly boys like to dance! Look at 'em. A scene from an Al Gilbert production. You guessed it—the big one is Maestro Gilbert himself. —Grant Photo

M-I-S-S-I-S-S-I-P-P-I

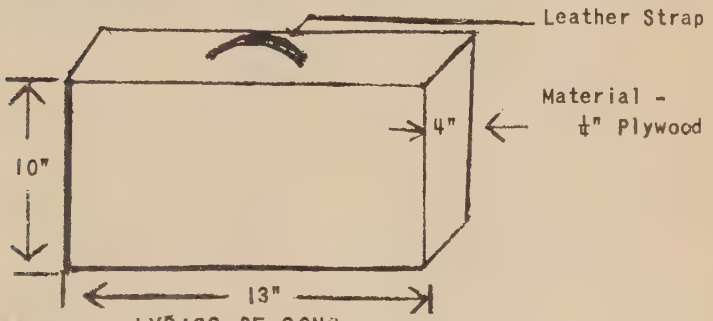
A Novelty Tap Routine for Children 5 to 8 years old

by Al Gilbert

MUSIC: "M-I-S-S-I-S-S-I-P-P-I" - published by Leo Feist, New York. 4 Bar Intro, 2 Cho. (total 32 Bars). Especially set to: STEPPING TONES RECORD #107, "B" Side.

NOTE: As curtain rises, eleven children are lined up on stage, standing behind a wooden block each. The blocks are lying face down on the stage and each child has the handle of the block ready to lift it on his own letter.

DIAGRAM OF WOODEN BLOCK



LYRICS OF SONG

M-I-S, S-I-S, S-I-P-P-I,
That used to be so hard to spell,
It used to make me cry, boo hoo,
But since I've studied spelling,
It's just like pumpkin pie - SO-
M-I-S, S-I-S, S-I-P-P-I.

STEP ONE (while singing)

MEAS.	COUNT	TERM
1	1	LETTER "M" block is lifted so that letter is shown to audience, child remains in squat position.
	2	LETTER "I" repeats movement.
	3	LETTER "S" repeats movement.
	4	Rest
2	5	LETTER "S" repeats movement.
	6	LETTER "I" repeats movement.
	7	LETTER "S" repeats movement.
	8	Rest

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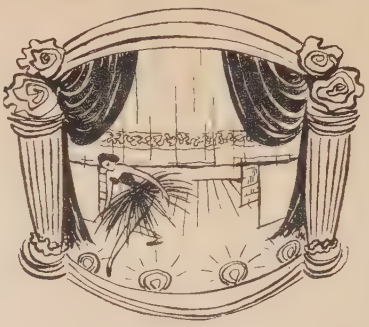

3	1	LETTER "S" repeats movement.
	2	LETTER "I" repeats movement.
	3	LETTER "P" repeats movement.
	4	LETTER "P" repeats movement.
4	5	LETTER "I" repeats movement.
	6-8	All children stand up but leave blocks on floor in upright position so that complete word "MISSISSIPPI" can be read by audience.

STEP TWO (still singing)

5	1	Step R to side R	(on "That
	2	Dig L to R	(on "used
	3	Step L to side L	(on "to be
	4	Dig R to L	(on "so
6	5-8	Repeat Meas. 5	(on "hard to spell,
7	1-4	Repeat Meas. 5	(on "It used to make me
8	5	Step R	(on "cry
	6,7	Both hands to eyes as if crying	(on "boo hoo".
	8	Both thumbs under arms proudly	(on "But,

STEP THREE (still singing - thumbs under arms)

9	1	Step R to side R	(on "Since
	2	Step L next to R	(on "I've
	3	Step R to side R	(on "stud-
	4	Dig L next to R	(on "ied
10	5-8	Reverse Meas. 9	(on "spelling. It's
11	1	Step R to side R	(on "just
	2	Kick L cross front of R	(on "like
	3	Step L to side L	(on "pump-
	4	Kick R cross front of L	(on "kin
12	5	Step R	(on "pie
	6,7	Rub tummy in yum-yum fashion	
	8	Point R forefinger to audience	(on "SO

(To be concluded next month)

—An AL GILBERT routine. P.O. Box 36479 Hollywood 36, Calif.—

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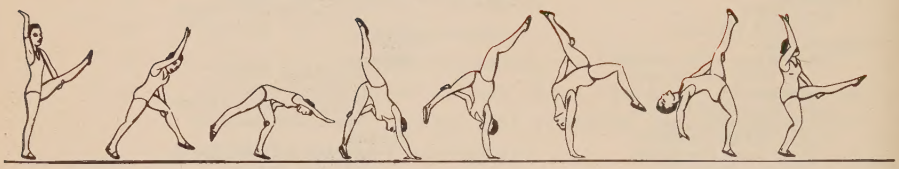
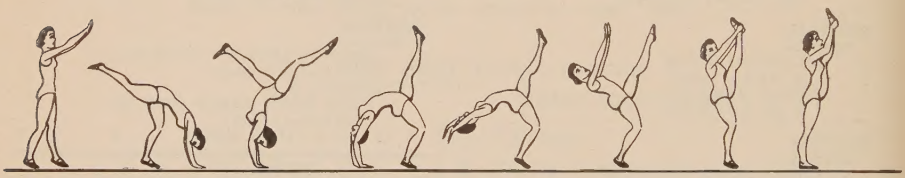


10. CONTROL WALKOVER

From a standing position on the right leg, left leg held forward and upward by the left hand under the knee. Start the same as for a one hand walkover, placing left foot and right hand on the floor, immediately kicking right leg backward and upward and finishing in a standing position on the right leg with the left leg held forward the same as in the original starting position. Do not try to arch the back, but keep it straight when coming up out of the walkover.
(At no time must you let go of the left leg.)



11. SLOW CONTROL WALKOVER

Start the same as for a regular walkover but stop left leg straight up in the air, while right leg and both hands are on the floor. Raise both hands, head and body, forward and up from the floor. Left leg must remain straight up in the air at all times. Grasp ankle of left leg with both hands and pull leg up to the side of the head. While coming out of the back bend, gradually straighten back.

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